

**Master Thesis Synopsis for**  
**Master of Science in Project Management**  
**University of Aberdeen**

**Name & Student ID Number:**

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**Thesis Title:**

Managing Projects, Programmes and Portfolios: The Efficacy of Maturity Models as frameworks for Improving Performance

**Thesis Background:**

Maturity models in project environments are not a new phenomenon but their efficacy is not always apparent. Clearly, a structured approach to any maturation process or commercial problem must be preferable to chaos, but how does one determine whether a particular model (or indeed, any of the models) actually works?

In my role as a project manager and subsequently as a project management consultant, I am required to help organisations develop their project management expertise and, by promoting a single, scalable process, I can offer consistent implementation and predictable outcomes. Nonetheless, such an aspiration relies on selecting the most appropriate method and being able to demonstrate its value.

Intellectually, I am committed to the concept of structured methodologies as a paradigm for improved governance: however, as a pragmatist, I demand at least some assurance that a selected model is *fit for purpose!* This thesis is about balancing these conflicting positions and adding value to my client's needs.

**Goals and Primary Research Question:**

The primary goal of this thesis is to examine and test the evidence for the presumption that maturity models enhance project, programme and portfolio management by augmenting governance.

Specifically, the paper will seek to determine:

1. Whether there is a correlation between an organisation's level of maturity and its performance.
2. Whether users consider maturity models to promote organisational agility or impose bureaucratic rigidity.

The paper will consider three additional questions, viz:

1. How widespread is the adoption of maturity models in project management organisations?
2. How do organisations identify the requirement for a maturity model and subsequently evaluate and select a particular model?
3. How can organisations evaluate efficacy when financial performance indicators are not the drivers for change?

**Methods:**

The thesis will combine conceptual appraisal of the subject with practical research and analysis to determine current attitudes to maturity modelling within the project management community.

The paper will open with a discussion on the nature and provenance of maturity models, reviewing the existing literature and published evidence for their efficacy. Thereafter, the submission will consider the presumption that maturity models enhance performance and seek to test this presumption with a research effort.

Following on from the contextual considerations, the thesis will consider the main findings of the research effort and contrast it with the presumption adopted.

The thesis will close with a summary of the research and a conclusion.